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EXAMINER	
CORDRAY, DENNIS R	
ART UNIT	**PAPER NUMBER**
1731	

NOTIFICATION DATE	DELIVERY MODE
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Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Notice of the Office communication was sent electronically on above-indicated "Notification Date" to the following e-mail address(es):

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Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)	
	10/815,159	STEPHENS ET AL.	
	Examiner	Art Unit	
	Dennis Cordray	1731	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

1)☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on *08 May 2007*.

2a)☒ This action is **FINAL**. 2b)☐ This action is non-final.

3)☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

4)☒ Claim(s) *1-14* is/are pending in the application.

4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.

5)☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.

6)☒ Claim(s) *1-14* is/are rejected.

7)☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.

8)☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

9)☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.

10)☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a)☐ accepted or b)☐ objected to by the Examiner.

Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).

Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).

11)☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

12)☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).

a)☐ All b)☐ Some * c)☐ None of:

1.☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.

2.☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.

3.☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

1) ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08) Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____.
4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ .
5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application
6) ☐ Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

Response to Arguments

1. Applicant's amendments and arguments filed 5/8/2007 have failed to overcome the prior art rejections. However, the rejections have been modified to reflect "individualized, whitened crosslinked cellulosic fibers."

Applicant argues that Cook et al does not disclose treating fibers with a whitening agent that comprises one or more dyes.

The rejection of Claims 1, 6-8 and 17-19 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as obvious over Cook et al as evidenced by Farr et al is based on the product-by-process language of the claims. From MPEP 2113:

> "[E]ven though product-by-process claims are limited by and defined by the process, determination of patentability is based on the product itself. The patentability of a product does not depend on its method of production. If the product in the product-by-process claim is the same as or obvious from a product of the prior art, the claim is unpatentable even though the prior product was made by a different process." In re Thorpe, 777 F.2d 695, 698, 227 USPQ 964, 966 (Fed. Cir. 1985).
>
> "The Patent Office bears a lesser burden of proof in making out a case of prima facie obviousness for product-by-process claims because of their peculiar nature" than when a product is claimed in the conventional fashion. In re Fessmann, 489 F.2d 742, 744, 180 USPQ 324, 326 (CCPA 1974). Once the examiner provides a rationale tending to show that the claimed product

appears to be the same or similar to that of the prior art, although produced by a different process, the burden shifts to applicant to come forward with evidence establishing an unobvious difference between the claimed product and the prior art product. In re Marosi, 710 F.2d 798, 802, 218 USPQ 289, 292 (Fed. Cir. 1983)

"[T]he lack of physical description in a product-by-process claim makes determination of the patentability of the claim more difficult, since in spite of the fact that the claim may recite only process limitations, it is the patentability of the product claimed and not of the recited process steps which must be established. We are therefore of the opinion that when the prior art discloses a product which reasonably appears to be either identical with or only slightly different than a product claimed in a product-by-process claim, a rejection based alternatively on either section 102 or section 103 of the statute is eminently fair and acceptable. As a practical matter, the Patent Office is not equipped to manufacture products by the myriad of processes put before it and then obtain prior art products and make physical comparisons therewith." In re Brown, 459 F.2d 531, 535, 173 USPQ 685, 688 (CCPA 1972).

The product of the rejected claims is individualized, whitened crosslinked cellulosic fluff pulp fibers. Cook et al discloses individualized, whitened crosslinked cellulosic fluff pulp fibers, which appear to be the same product as the claimed fibers, although produced by a different process. Applicant has argued on pp 4-5 that the bleaching process has a different physical effect on the colorants and chromophoric groups of the fibers than the addition of a dye. The

arguments of counsel cannot take the place of evidence in the record. In re Schulze, 346 F.2d 600, 602, 145 USPQ 716, 718 (CCPA 1965); In re Geisler, 116 F.3d 1465, 43 USPQ2d 1362 (Fed. Cir. 1997) ("An assertion of what seems to follow from common experience is just attorney argument and not the kind of factual evidence that is required to rebut a prima facie case of obviousness."). The Applicant has not shown evidence that the claimed process results in a different product from that disclosed by Cook et al.

Applicant also argues on p 5 that the claimed fibers are not treated with a bleaching agent as are the fibers of Cook et al. The open language of the instant claims does not preclude additional whitening treatments to the crosslinked fibers as known in the art.

Applicant argues on pp 6-7 that Westland et al does not describe individualized, crosslinked cellulosic fibers, but a web of crosslinked fibers. Applicant argues that there is no teaching, suggestion or motivation to combine the teachings of Cook et al with the teachings of Westland et al. Westland et al discloses incorporating the individualized fibers into a fibrous web prior to crosslinking and that the web can be heated to effect intrafiber crosslinking (col 2, lines 21-27). The web is made of individualized fibers, thus the crosslinked fibers are still individualized crosslinked fibers, although in web form. What is the structural difference between the web of individualized intrafiber crosslinked fibers of Westland et al and those of the instant invention, which are also intrafiber crosslinked fibers? Does the physical form, fluff pulp or web form create different intrafiber crosslinks?

Obviousness can only be established by combining or modifying the teachings of the prior art to produce the claimed invention where there is some teaching, suggestion, or motivation to do so. In re Kahn, 441 F.3d 977, 986, 78 USPQ2d 1329, 1335 (Fed. Cir. 2006) (discussing rationale underlying the motivation-suggestion-teaching requirement as a guard against using hindsight in an obviousness analysis). The teaching, suggestion, or motivation must be found either explicitly or implicitly in the references themselves or in the knowledge generally available to one of ordinary skill in the art. "The test for an implicit showing is what the combined teachings, knowledge of one of ordinary skill in the art, and the nature of the problem to be solved as a whole would have suggested to those of ordinary skill in the art." In re Kotzab, 217 F.3d 1365, 1370, 55 USPQ2d 1313, 1317 (Fed. Cir. 2000)

Westland teaches that it is known in the art to treat fibers with a dye and a crosslinking agent and to subsequently crosslink the fibers. Casey et al and Biermann teach that it is well known in the art to add a blue dye to pulp as a whitening agent to offset the tendency for pulp to be yellow, and provide the motivation to do so, customer preference to a blue-white color over a yellow-white color. The yellowing of fibers crosslinked with citric acid is well known in the art. Cook et al also teaches that bleaching crosslinked fibers improves the brightness, and also whiteness since bleaching is known to improve whiteness. The references teach only knowledge of methods for whitening cellulosic fibers that is generally available to one of ordinary skill in the art and the nature of the problems solved by the known methods.

Both bleaching and addition of blue dyes are well known to those of ordinary skill in the art to counteract yellowing and whiten cellulosic fibers. "It is prima facie obvious to combine two compositions each of which is taught by the prior art to be useful for the same purpose, in order to form a third composition to be used for the very same purpose.... [T]he idea of combining them flows logically from their having been individually taught in the prior art." In re Kerkhoven, 626 F.2d 846, 850, 205 USPQ 1069, 1072 (CCPA 1980). A similar flow of logic is applicable in the current case. Combining the two processes, bleaching and addition of a blue dye whitening agent, each of which is taught by the prior art to be useful for whitening cellulosic fibers, would therefore have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art.

The rejections are maintained.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The text of those sections of Title 35, U.S. Code not included in this action can be found in a prior Office action.

2. Claims 1, 5 and 12-14 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35.U.S.C. 103(a) as obvious over Cook et al (5562740) as evidenced by Farr et al ("Bleaching Agents" Kirk-Othmer Encyclopedia of Chemical Technology, V.4, p 43).

Cook et al discloses individualized, whitened crosslinked cellulosic fibers and a process for making the fibers comprising: applying a citric acid crosslinking agent and a crosslinking catalyst to a web of fibers, separating the web into individualized fibers, heating the individualized fibers to provide individualized

crosslinked fibers, and bleaching the crosslinked fibers using hydrogen peroxide and sodium hydroxide. (abstract; col 13, lines 22-25). The fibers are preferably mechanically defibrated into a fibrous form known as "fluff" prior to reaction of the crosslinking agent with the fibers (col 8, lines 42-44), thus are fluff pulp fibers. Cook et al further discloses that the fibers can be used to form absorbent products such as diapers, feminine care products, and tissues (col 17, lines 30-35).

Cook et al teaches that the citric acid crosslinking agent can cause discoloring (i.e., yellowing) of the white cellulosic fibers when treated at elevated temperatures and result in unpleasant odors (col 3, lines 33-40). Cook et al discloses that bleaching improves the product brightness and reduces odor (col 3, lines 41-52).

A bleaching agent whitens a substrate by chemical reaction (for evidence, see Farr et al, p 43, subtopic "Introduction"), thus bleached pulps are whiter than unbleached pulps. The bleached fluff pulp of Cook et al therefore comprises individualized, whitened crosslinked cellulosic fluff pulp fibers.

Claims 1, 5 and 12-14 are product-by-process claims. The product of Cook et al appears to be the same as or similar to the claimed product, individualized whitened crosslinked cellulosic fluff pulp fibers, although produced by a different process. The burden therefore shifts to applicant to come forward with evidence establishing an unobvious difference between the claimed product and the prior art product. In re Marosi, 710 F.2d 798, 802, 218 USPQ 289, 292 (Fed. Cir.1983). "In the event any differences can be shown for the product of

the product-by-process claims 1, 5 and 12-14 as opposed to the product taught by the reference Cook et al, such differences would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art as a routine modification of the product in the absence of a showing of unexpected results: see also In re Thorpe, 777 F.2d 695, 698, 227 USPQ 964, 966 (Fed. Cir. 1985)"

3. Claims 2, 6-7 and 10-11 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Cook et al in view of Casey (Pulp and Paper Chemistry and Chemical Technology, 3rd ed, vol III, John Wiley & sons, 1981) and Biermann (Essentials of Pulping and Papermaking, Academic Press, Inc., 1993), and further in view of Westland et al (6300259).

The disclosure of Cook et al is detailed above. Cook et al also discloses that sodium hypophosphite is used as a crosslinking catalyst (col 12, lines 7-12 and 28-30).

Cook et al does not disclose adding a blue dye to the fibers prior to crosslinking.

Casey et al teaches that paper can be whitened by adding a blue dye because the dye is complementary to the natural yellow tint of pulp (p 1833, last par bridging to to p 1834). Although the addition of a dye reduces total reflectance, Casey teaches that yellowness is about four times as important to the visual perception of whiteness than total reflectance (p 1835, 2nd full par), thus a reduction of yellowness and an increase in whiteness is achieved by adding a blue dye. The blue dye can be added as a surface treatment or to the

stock (par spanning pp 1834-1835). Casey also teaches that a small amount of blue dye or blue pigment is often added to the stock (which comprises the pulp fibers) and results in a "pleasant effect because the average person prefers a blue-white to a yellowish white" (p 1835, next to last par), thus providing motivation to whiten the fibers using a blue dye. Thus the use of a whitening agent to whiten pulp is well known to those of ordinary skill in the art.

Biermann teaches that blue dye is often added to pulp to offset the tendency for pulp to be yellow (p 197, left col, 2nd par), thus the use of a whitening agent to whiten pulp is well known to those of ordinary skill in the art.

Westland et al discloses a method of forming a crosslinkable cellulosic fibrous product comprising applying a crosslinking agent to a mat of cellulosic fibers, drying the mat so that no crosslinking occurs, separating the mat into individualized treated fibers, incorporating the individualized fibers into a fibrous web and heating the web to affect crosslinking (col 5, line 34 to col 6, line 6). Pretreatment or post treatment of the fibers with a dye is also disclosed (col 3, lines 8-12). Cellulosic fibers treated with a dye and a crosslinking agent, separated into individualized form and subsequently heated to provide crosslinking are thus known to one of ordinary skill from prior art.

The art of Cook et al, Casey, Biermann, Westland et al and the instant invention are analogous as pertaining to the art of whitening cellulosic fibers. It would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person with ordinary skill in the art to add a blue dye as a pretreatment to the fibers to increase whiteness of the fibrous product in the process of Cook et al in view of

Casey and Biermann and further in view of Westland et al to make the product more preferable to customers. Whether the fibers are fluff pulp (mechanically defibrated into a low density individualized fibrous form known as "fluff" as taught by Cook et al) or papermaking fibers, they are cellulosic fibers, and it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to obtain individualized whitened cellulosic fibers, including individualized whitened crosslinked fluff pulp.

Both bleaching and addition of blue dyes are known to those of ordinary skill in the art to counteract yellowing in and thus whiten cellulosic fibers. From MPEP 2144.06:

> "It is prima facie obvious to combine two compositions each of which is taught by the prior art to be useful for the same purpose, in order to form a third composition to be used for the very same purpose.... [T]he idea of combining them flows logically from their having been individually taught in the prior art." In re Kerkhoven, 626 F.2d 846, 850, 205 USPQ 1069, 1072 (CCPA 1980).

Combining the two processes, bleaching or addition of a whitening agent, such as a blue dye, to the fibers for the same purpose of whitening the fibers would therefore have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art. Note that the language of the instant claims, "comprising", does not preclude a post-crosslinking bleaching step.

4. Claims 3-4 and 8-9 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Cook et al, Casey, Biermann and Westland et al, as applied to

claims 1-2 above, and further in view of Chudgar et al ("Dyes, Azo" Kirk-Othmer Encyclopedia of Chemical Technology, John Wiley & Sons, 2003, Introduction) and von der Eltz et al (5512064).

Cook et al, Casey, Biermann and Westland et al do not disclose blue azo dyes or azo metal complex dyes.

Chudgar et al teaches that azo dyes are the largest class of organic dyes and are widely used in the textile and paper industries, thus are well known in the art.

Von der Eltz et al teach that azo dyes and azo metal complex dyes are well known art and are completely familiar to one skilled in the art (col 5, lines 10-19).

The art of Cook et al, Casey, Biermann, Westland et al, Chudgar et al, Von der Eltz et al and the instant invention are analogous in that they are from the art of treating cellulosic fibers. It would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person with ordinary skill in the art to add a blue azo dye to the formed web to increase whiteness of the fibrous product in the process of Cook et al et al in view of Casey and Biermann and further in view of Westland et al, Chudgar et al and Von der Eltz et al to make the product more preferable to customers. In the absence of limiting parameters not revealed in the current disclosure it would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person with ordinary skill in the art to use a blue azo metal complex dye as a functionally equivalent option.

5. Claims 1-3, 5-7 and 10-14 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Westland et al (6300259) in view of Casey and Biermann.

Westland et al discloses a method of forming a crosslinkable cellulosic fibrous product comprising applying a crosslinking agent to a mat of cellulosic fibers, drying the mat so that no crosslinking occurs, separating the mat into individualized treated fibers, incorporating the individualized fibers into a fibrous web and heating the web to affect crosslinking (col 5, line 34 to col 6, line 6). Pretreatment or post treatment of the fibers with a dye is also disclosed (col 3, lines 8-12). Westland also discloses the use of citric acid as a crosslinking agent (col 5, lines 11-12) and sodium hypophosphite as a crosslinking catalyst (col 6, lines 39-40). Westland further discloses that the fibers can be used to form absorbent products such as diapers, feminine care products, incontinence products and toweling (col 7, lines 4-11).

Westland et al does not disclose adding a whitening agent to the fibers.

The teachings of Casey et al and Biermann are as above.

The art of Westland et al, Casey, Biermann, and the instant invention is analogous as pertaining to the art of crosslinking and whitening cellulosic fibers. It would have been obvious to a person with ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to add a blue dye as a pretreatment to increase whiteness of the fibrous product in the process of Westland et al in view of Casey and Biermann to make the product more preferable to customers. The individualized fibers of Westland et al are intended for the same uses in

absorbent products as fluff pulp fibers and it would have been obvious to apply the method of Westland et al to fluff pulp fibers.

13. Claims 4 and 8-9 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Westland et al, Casey, Biermann and Sprang et al, as applied to claims 1-3 5-8 and 10-14 above, and further in view of Chudgar et al and von der Eltz et al.

Westland et al, Casey and Biermann et al do not disclose the use of an azo metal complex dye as a blue dye.

The teachings of Chudgar et al and von der Eltz et al are as above.

The art of Westland et al, Casey, Biermann, Chudgar et al, von der Eltz et al and the instant invention is analogous as pertaining to the art of crosslinking and whitening cellulosic fibers. In the absence of limiting parameters not revealed in the current disclosure it would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person with ordinary skill in the art to add a blue azo metal complex dye as a functionally equivalent option to the formed web to increase whiteness of the fibrous product in the process of Westland et al in view of Casey, Biermann and Sprang et al and further in view of von der Eltz et al to make the product more preferable to customers.

Double Patenting

The nonstatutory double patenting rejection is based on a judicially created doctrine grounded in public policy (a policy reflected in the statute) so as to prevent the unjustified or improper timewise extension of the "right to exclude" granted by a patent and to prevent possible harassment by multiple assignees. A nonstatutory obviousness-type double patenting rejection is appropriate where

the conflicting claims are not identical, but at least one examined application claim is not patentably distinct from the reference claim(s) because the examined application claim is either anticipated by, or would have been obvious over, the reference claim(s). See, e.g., *In re Berg*, 140 F.3d 1428, 46 USPQ2d 1226 (Fed. Cir. 1998); *In re Goodman*, 11 F.3d 1046, 29 USPQ2d 2010 (Fed. Cir. 1993); *In re Longi*, 759 F.2d 887, 225 USPQ 645 (Fed. Cir. 1985); *In re Van Ornum*, 686 F.2d 937, 214 USPQ 761 (CCPA 1982); *In re Vogel*, 422 F.2d 438, 164 USPQ 619 (CCPA 1970); and *In re Thorington*, 418 F.2d 528, 163 USPQ 644 (CCPA 1969).

A timely filed terminal disclaimer in compliance with 37 CFR 1.321(c) or 1.321(d) may be used to overcome an actual or provisional rejection based on a nonstatutory double patenting ground provided the conflicting application or patent either is shown to be commonly owned with this application, or claims an invention made as a result of activities undertaken within the scope of a joint research agreement.

Effective January 1, 1994, a registered attorney or agent of record may sign a terminal disclaimer. A terminal disclaimer signed by the assignee must fully comply with 37 CFR 3.73(b).

6. Claims 1-2 and 5 are rejected on the ground of nonstatutory obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over claims 1, 3, 6 and 7 of U. S. Patent No. 6893473. Although the conflicting claims are not identical, they are not patentably distinct from each other because the subject matter claimed in the instant application is fully disclosed in the patent or would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill n the art and is covered by the patent since the patent and the application are claiming common subject matter, as follows:

The instant Claims are directed to a product, individualized whitened crosslinked cellulosic fluff pulp fibers comprising a whitening material or agent (Claim 1). The fibers are citric acid crosslinked fibers (Claim 5). The whitening agent is a blue dye (Claim 2).

The claims of U. S. Patent No. 6893473 are directed to a product, whitened fluff pulp comprising pulp fibers and a whitening agent (Claim 1). The

fibers can be citric acid crosslinked fluff pulp (Claims 6-7). The whitening material is a blue dye (Claim 3). The process of creating fluff pulp, which involves mechanically defibrating fibers into a low density individualized fibrous form known as "fluff", will create at least some individualized fibers or, at least, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art that individualized fibers will be created.

7. Claims 1-14 provisionally rejected under the judicially created doctrine of obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over claims 1, 3-6, 9-14 and 17-19 of copending Application No. 10/813957.

Although the conflicting claims are not identical, they are not patentably distinct from each other because the instant invention fully encompasses the referenced claims of the copending application.

- Claim 1 of the instant invention is drawn to a product, individualized whitened crosslinked cellulosic fluff pulp fibers, and does not preclude the use of a bleaching agent as claimed in Claim 1 of the copending application. Claim 1 of the copending application is also drawn to a product, individualized whitened crosslinked cellulosic fluff pulp fibers.
- Claims 2-5 of the instant invention read the same as claims 3-6 of the copending application after appropriate changes in the referenced claim numbers.

- Claim 6 of the instant invention does not preclude the use of a bleaching agent as specified in Claim 9 of the copending application and, other than the additional step of applying a bleaching agent, the claims read identically.
- Claims 7-11 of the instant application read the same as Claims 10-14 of the copending application after appropriate changes in the referenced claim numbers.
- Claims 12-14 of the instant application read identically to Claims 17-19 of the copending application after appropriate changes in the referenced claim numbers.

This is a provisional obviousness-type double patenting rejection because the conflicting claims have not in fact been patented.

Conclusion

THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL. Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Dennis Cordray whose telephone number is 571-272-8244. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F, 7:30-4:00 PM.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Steven Griffin can be reached on 571-272-1189. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see http://pair-direct.uspto.gov. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

STEVEN P. GRIFFIN
SUPERVISORY PATENT EXAMINER
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DRC